



This week at Magdalen Road Church we continued our Autumn series in Ephesians as we reached chapter 4. From here on in Paul is considering how to live out the unity that the cross has achieved, and that the Lord through his word, is achieving. He urges us to both keep the unity that we have, as well as continue to grow in unity as the Lord grows his church.

v1-6: Keeping up our unity

Paul says to the diverse Ephesian Church – you ARE united – now remain at peace with one another. The 2 major threats to our unity at church are me, and you. And so it seems almost expected that we will struggle – hence Paul’s need to urge them to be humble (honesty about our own faults and weaknesses and so appreciation for God’s kindness to me), gentle (the everyday outworking of humility), patient and abounding in love. These are not things we can work up in ourselves but rather flow from an increasing understanding and grasp of Christ’s love (see Paul’s prayer last week). He then reminds them of why they are to relate like this – because they are 1 (v3-6). Strikingly the ‘ones’ that he lists are underpinned by the (Triune) one-ness of God (Spirit, Lord, Father of all). We noted that a number of aspects of church life for us at MRC mean unity is vital at the moment. With CCC and TCO heading off in the near future, with discussions over Irving and buildings, and also the slightly larger scale of inter-church unity (this letter probably being for churches in Ephesus - plural).

v7-16: Growing up in unity

As well as the unity that has been achieved by Jesus, he describes the growing maturity that will lead to increased unity. To enable this unity, the risen and ascended Jesus bestows foundational word gifts upon his church (v11) – these then equip the church for active works of service and a growth in speaking the truth in love to one another. Rather than just giving us maturity, he wants us to grow into that. We noted that an increasingly mature body is seen in words (v15) and works (v12 and v16) and that these are to be full of love.

Here are just a few questions that might get things going, please feel very free to ignore / adapt for your group:

What do you remember so far from Ephesians?!
Any key verses / ideas / arguments that Paul has made.

From v1-6 what reasons does Paul give for maintaining unity?
What methods does he give for keeping unity?
Is this just about ‘will-power’? Why / why not?

How are we to practically keep unified at this time in MRCs life?
What challenges are there to unity?

From v7-16 track & describe the process of growing in maturity / unity.
What’s going on in v7-10?
What gifts does Jesus bestow? Why these ones?
What do these gifts achieve?

If you were to describe a church growing in maturity from v11-16, what aspects would you bring out from these verses?
What aspect are words to play in church life from v15?
What about works of service?

Why does Paul re-iterate love?!